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ABSTRACT

The report describes a visit of a Saudi Arabian educator to four programs for visually handicapped students in the United States in order to determine the feasibility of introducing these programs or some aspects of them in Saudi Arabia. Advantages and disadvantages of four types of programs are considered: (1) a residential school, (2) an itinerant teacher program, (3) a resource room program, and (4) a rehabilitation center. In a chapter reviewing background information and describing present facilities in Saudi Arabia, it is noted that the existing services combine residential facilities, daytime schools, and employment settings. Two stages are suggested for providing alternative services: (1) meeting the most urgent needs--this would require fairly limited personnel and planning, and (2) setting up long range goals--this would involve extensive planning and a long period of training. Among conclusions noted are that the major deficit in services for the blind in Saudi Arabia is lack of trained professionals and that the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare in that country has not yet assumed its role in rehabilitation, training, and placement of visually impaired adults. The Basic Arabic Braille Chart, developed at the Braille Unification Conference (UNESCO, 1952) by S. I. Al-Muhanna, Rebecca Ann Anderson, and Ahmed Mohamed Hamoud Shuga'a, is appended. (CL)

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY SYSTEMS OF SERVICES FOR THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED IN SAUDI ARABIA

A Written Report of the Practicum Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Specialist in Education

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Fall Quarter, 1980

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The educational and rehabilitation services for the visually handicapped in the United States are being delivered through varieties of programs. Among these programs are the residential school, the resource room program, the itinerant teacher arrangement and the rehabilitation center. Each one of these systems has its advantages and disadvantages, its strengths and weaknesses. Could these programs be introduced in Saudi Arabia or are there comparable programs to deliver the same services?

In an attempt to gain more understanding of each individual system of delivery of services, the author has spent two weeks at:

1. a residential school,
2. an itinerant teacher program,
3. a resource room program, and
4. a rehabilitation center.

The main objectives of his visit were:

1. To get a better understanding of the actual arrangement and procedures followed in each program.

2. To watch some of the professionals in each program performing their tasks and to talk with them about their experiences and concerns.

3. To see the feasibility of introducing these programs or some aspects of them in Saudi Arabia.

CHAPTER II

PROGRAMS VISITED

The Residential School

The first period of the practicum, March 17-28, 1980, was spent at the Tennessee School for the Blind. Like all residential schools, the Tennessee School for the Blind caters to children with visual impairment from kindergarten through high school.

The school is located in Donelson, a nice, quiet suburb of Nashville. It has excellent physical facilities. A large campus consists of fourteen different buildings with plenty of spaces filled with grass, trees, and playground areas. To my pleasure, it does not have a fence surrounding it. I was told that the school used to have a farm in which the students were able to learn some farming skills and the school used to get some of its food supplies from it. But, unfortunately, as many have expressed, the farm has been abandoned in the last few years.

The physical education building has a good swimming pool, a large gymnasium, an exercise room, a wrestling room, modern bowling facilities, and a lot of equipment, some of which may never have been used. In addition to the regular physical education periods, the students can use this building on most afternoons and evenings.

The library has quite a large number of volumes in both braille and large print. It subscribes to several periodicals in both media. In addition, it keeps a number of talking books on hand from the Library of Congress. The Library has a section for the professional periodicals and professional books. It is usually open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., except weekends. The school has vocational orientation facilities; i.e., office occupation setting and shop and home repair.

At the time of my visit, the school enrollment was 171 pupils. Fifty-three of them are low-functioning children who have one or more handicapping conditions in addition to their visual loss. Almost all of the students live on school premises. To cater to all of the needs of the pupils, the school has about 160 employees. About one-third of them are part-time. For the student's health needs the school has a clinic which is usually open from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. It is staffed with a physical therapist and nurses, and has regularly scheduled visits by doctors and other health specialists. The school has a psychologist, a student guidance counselor, and three mobility specialists.

The school has a preschool coordinator whose job is to offer counseling and advice to the families of visually impaired babies, in addition to serving the school age children, to make initial assessment of the visually impaired preschoolers and to advise the families of the alternative educational facilities for their children.

To accommodate for the changing population of the pupils, the school offers three curriculum plans:

One plan is designed for the "normal" visually impaired children.

It is basically a regular academic curriculum--kindergarten through twelfth grades--including some specific needs such as mobility.

The second plan is for those children who are, due to physical or mental limitation, not likely to be able to go through high school or beyond. The emphasis of this plan is on career education, vocational orientation, and training.

The third plan is designed for the very low-functioning children. The main emphasis of this plan is on self-help skills, physical and language development, and some communication skills.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Residential School Program

There are a lot of advantages to a residential school program. Among them:

1. The feasibility of hiring well-trained professionals in all areas of both academic subjects and compensatory skills.

2. Easy access to specially built or modified equipment.

3. Easy access to textbooks, references, and other educational materials in the most appropriate form for the child.

4. The choice of certain textbooks or a set of materials for any subject area could be based on the availability of them in the form most suitable for the visually impaired children.

5. Neither the children nor their teachers have to spend time in commuting daily to and from the school.

6. The negative attitudes and constraints which might be caused by an ill-adjusted family could be eliminated.

7. The time children spend at school, the physical facilities, and the possibility of recruitment of professionals allows for the proper environment to provide all the specific educational needs of each individual child.

Among the disadvantages of a residential school program:

1. The very high cost of running such a program.

2. Separating the children from their families.

3. Segregating the children from neighborhood children and the sighted community at large.

4. Indirect reinforcement of isolation and association only with those who have visual problems.

5. Depriving the children of the experiences that they could have if they were living at home and attending a public school.

6. Limitation on the variety of programs that the school could offer due to the limited number of children in each grade.

7. The rules and regulations regarding dormitory life may not be suitable for all pupils and quite often produce young men and women who have not had sufficient experience in living independently in an open community.

8. The new and innovative ideas may not flourish since most of the residential settings tend to be closed and the change of staff is very limited.

Trends and Roles of the Residential School

The residential schools play an important role in the education of the visually handicapped. In addition to the employment of several

measures to maximize its advantages and minimize its disadvantages, the residential programs are assuming a new role. However, this new role presents some problems and challenges.

The residential schools for the blind are serving more and more multi-handicapped and low-functioning children. The increase in the number of those children and the diversity and complexity of their handicapping conditions presents a great challenge: (a) staff members have to be retrained and/or new ones have to be hired; (b) the self-esteem and motivation among the traditional staff and pupils tends to deteriorate; and (c) the problem of "burn out" among the staff may be more prevalent than before.

Many residential schools are serving the families and public schools by providing consultation, as well as information and depository functioning for books, materials, and equipment in order to educate the visually impaired child in his or her local school. These responsibilities also might require retraining of staff members and/or employment of new ones. It might require some changes regarding the residential schools' legal responsibilities and their by-laws.

The Itinerant Teaching Program

The second period of the practicum, April 7-18, 1980, was spent with the Foundation for Blind Children at Scottsdale, Arizona. During my stay at Scottsdale, I visited many programs serving the blind in the greater Phoenix area. Among them were several itinerant teacher programs run by different public school districts. Although the time I spent with every itinerant teacher was very short, it gave me some

insight regarding such arrangements. The itinerant teaching arrangement is developed to allow the handicapped child to remain with his peers and yet receive the necessary assistance. In this provision, a specially trained teacher visits a number of public schools where visually impaired children are attending. The number of visits and the duration of each one varies depending on the need of the child and his classroom teacher for assistance or advice.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Itinerant Teacher Program

The itinerant teacher program has many advantages. Among them:

1. The children are fully mainstreamed.

2. The children's family ties are fully maintained.

3. The children go to school with their neighborhood peers.

4. The children have the opportunity to enjoy their local community facilities and could attend all activities as any other child in their community.

5. The children have access to the variety of programs available for their peers at school and in the community.

6. The children are more likely to be in contact with several teachers which would expose them to different points of view and many ideas.

7. The use of residual vision is likely to be reinforced.

8. The social distance between the visually handicapped children and their peers at school, and the society at large, is minimized.

9. The models that the children are exposed to would help them in their social, physical, and overall development and self-esteem.

10. The itinerant teacher program is much less expensive than a residential school.

The itinerant teacher provision has its own disadvantages. Among them:

1. The special teacher spends a lot of time on the road instead of being with the children.

2. The itinerant teacher may not be quite competent in these essential areas:

a. The use of all specially designed or modified equipment;

b. Counseling of parents and regular classroom teachers;

c. Guidance and counseling of the pupils;

d. General knowledge of the administrative system;

e. Overall awareness of all subjects and varieties of programs offered by all the schools that he has pupils at;

f. The production of materials and the most appropriate medium for a child; and

g. A complete knowledge of all resources of materials, equipment, and all services for the visually impaired children.

3. The choice of textbook, educational materials, and programs is not based on their availability and a medium suitable for the visually handicapped children. The reproduction of these materials in a suitable medium takes a lot of time and costs a good sum of money.

4. The child may not get the material in a suitable form for him early enough to catch up with his class.

5. The child may not have enough individual attention.

6. The child might be subjected to low expectations and not enough motivation.

7. The child may not have sufficient instruction in the compensatory skills.

8. The principal and/or the classroom teacher might have a negative attitude towards handicapped children which would make it very difficult to secure their cooperation with the itinerant teacher.

9. Some local school districts might find it expensive to hire an itinerant teacher specialized in the education of visually handicapped children, even on a part-time basis.

10. The emotional disturbance and/or the negative attitude of the family might upset the educational process and the development of the child.

11. The itinerant teacher could hardly keep a strict plan. Traffice congestion, the newly occurred problems at a particular school, or the urgent need for a test force him to change his plan quite often.

12. The time that the children spend at school does not allow scheduling for compensatory skills without sacrificing some subject matters or extra-curricular activities.

In the greater Phoenix area, the disadvantages of the itinerant teacher program are being minimized by the variety of services offered by the Foundation for Blind Children. The success of any itinerant teacher program without such supportive services would be questionable.

Supportive Services to the Itinerant Teaching Program of the Greater Phoenix Area

The itinerant teaching program in this area was created by the Foundation for Blind Children and still receives many supportive services from it. The Foundation for Blind Children is a unique private non-profit agency founded in 1953. The reason for its creation was the interest of some families to keep their visually impaired children at home, yet to be sure that they receive appropriate education at their local schools.

A small group of concerned parents who determined to convince a public school to accept their blind children took the initiative to start their children in braille. Then, they recruited a volunteer to transcribe in braille, the necessary school material for their children. This group has grown gradually and become more interested in providing more services for the blind children. A few years later it was incorporated as an agency to provide a multitude of services for the blind children, their families, public schools, and other related agencies.

The agency is run by a board of directors which consists of parents, community leaders, businessmen, educators and professionals serving the blind, an executive committee, and staff.

The staff consists of the executive director, bookkeeper and secretary, orientation and mobility specialists, and three coordinators. The Coordinator of Materials is in charge of the library services and volunteers producing braille and large print materials, etc. The

Coordinator of Services to Infants and Young Children is responsible for the parent counseling, infant program, and preschool education. The Coordinator of Junior High and High School Students is in charge of counseling, pre-vocational training, and rehabilitation teaching.

The agency, since its inception, has been involved in securing textbooks and other educational material in either braille or large print for the blind children in its area. Later on, it was designated as Instructional Material Center and Depository for all the state of Arizona. Of course, like all other centers of the same function, it cooperates with all other regional centers.

To fulfill its objectives, the agency does the following:

1. Inservice training for personnel in hospitals, neonatal clinics, etc. in how to best serve the visually impaired.

2. Contact opthalmologists, especially pediatric, to secure earlier referral and follow-up.

3. Counseling and education of the parents of blind infants as early as possible. This is done by:

   a. Home visits;

   b. Conducting classes for parents with their infants; and

   c. Discussing the parents' concerns about their babies with specialists such as doctors, physiotherapists, and developmentalists.

4. Particirates with both public school districts and Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind in running two preschool cooperative programs; one of them is designed specifically for deaf-blind children.

5. For the older children the agency offers independent living experiences, pre-vocational orientation and counseling, etc.

6. Contracts with local school districts to provide orientation and mobility training for their visually impaired pupils.

7. Helps in organizing several recreational and social activities.

8. Provides a place and arranges for periodical meetings of all itinerant teachers in the area. These meetings allow for exchange of ideas, examination of new equipment or materials, and planning for further cooperation.

9. Participates in and arranges for workshops, seminars, public information campaigns, etc. Most of these programs and activities continue all year round.

The agency enjoys the dedication of an excellent staff and volunteers and the flexibility of a private agency. It has the freedom to contact and deal with anybody and any agency without fear of conflict of interests or complicated rules and regulations. It has the flexibility to send its members to seminars, conferences, workshops, etc. that deal with the education of the visually impaired.

The Resource Room Program

The third period of my practicum, April 21-May 2, 1980, was spent at Las Vegas, Nevada. During this period, I visited the education of the visually impaired program of the Clark Public School District. It is a resource room program.

In the resource room arrangement the visually impaired children are bused to a public school. At that school there is one classroom staffed by teachers of visually impaired and equipped with the necessary equipment, aids, and materials.

The children go to the regular classes with their peers and are referred to the resource room teacher for special instruction or specific needs. The specialized teacher consults with the classroom teachers to provide the children with the most appropriate education. In Las Vegas, I visited the infant and preschool programs and the four resource rooms for educating the visually impaired children.

The infant and family service specialist visits the parents of the visually impaired infants at their homes. She offers consultation, suggestions, training, and puts them in touch with agencies which offer some services that they might need.

For the pre-schooler, there is a three-hour program daily at one of the elementary schools. In this program the visually impaired children are taught some social and communication skills and pre-academic readiness. The specialist who runs the infant program in the morning runs this program with one aide in the afternoon.

The resource rooms are situated in a high school, a junior high school, and two at two of the elementary schools. Each resource room has a specialized teacher, an aide, and some equipment, materials, and devices. In addition, there is a depository which stocks brailled, large typed, recorded books, and other educational aids. The depository is staffed with one braillist and one large type transcriber.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Resource Room Program

The resource room program has many advantages among them:

1. Since the teacher of the visually impaired does not have to spend any time traveling in addition to his/her main role, he/she has sufficient time to:

   a. Visit the classes of his/her children and meet their classroom teachers to discuss their problems and progress;

   b. Know more about the various programs and activities offered by the school, and motivates his/her pupils to participate in them; and

   c. Fill in the gaps in the individualized educational program for each child, which could not be filled by the general school program.

2. The children live with their families and in their own neighborhood.

3. The children are integrated in the regular classroom most of the time.

4. The children are exposed to several teachers and, consequently, different points of view and many ideas.

5. The children see a lot of models which helps them in developing social and physical skills.

6. The use of residual vision is apt to be reinforced.

7. The number of children that a resource room could serve and the permanent location of it makes it feasible to furnish it with a lot of specially built or modified equipment.

The resource room, just like other programs, has its disadvantages. Among them:

1. The children do not go to school with their neighborhood children.

2. Many of the children have to be bused for a long distance.

3. The negative attitude of the family and any other family problems could not be eliminated.

4. The choice of textbooks and educational materials is not based on their availability in a medium suitable for the visually impaired children. The reproduction of these in a suitable medium takes a lot of time and costs a good sum of money.

5. The child may not receive the materials in a suitable form quickly enough to catch up with his classmates.

6. The child might be subjected to low expectations and/or not have enough motivation.

7. The child may not have sufficient instruction in the compensatory skills.

8. The availability of the specialized teacher and the specially equipped classroom might lead many regular classroom teachers and some principals to believe that the visually impaired children belong there most of the time and not in regular classes.

9. Some classroom teachers tend to refer the visually impaired children to the resource room for any problems, even if it doesn't have to do with special instruction, such as discipline problems.

10. Since the visually impaired children stay the same length of time at school as their peers, the time they spend in the resource room might be disadvantageous to some subject matter or extra-curricular activities.

Factors Which Help Minimize Disadvantages

The above disadvantages could be minimized by: (a) the competency of the teacher of the visually impaired; (b) his or her dedication and understanding; (c) the cooperation of the principal, classroom teacher, and other school personnel; (d) laying specific guidelines explaining the role of the resource room teacher and the responsibilities of the regular classroom teacher; and (e) making sure that important compensatory skills are taught, especially orientation and mobility, the use of residual vision, and independent living skills.

Unfortunately, the Clark School District has no means yet to provide the visually impaired children with instruction in these essential areas. Every teacher in the program does his or her best in teaching the children these skills. They are hoping that the district will hire an orientation and mobility specialist soon.

The Rehabilitation Center

The fourth and last period of the practicum was spent at the Minneapolis Society for the Blind (May 5-9, 1980). It is an agency serving adult blind and visually impaired persons.

The Society was founded in March, 1914, as a non-profit agency. It was incorporated in 1917. Its major goal was to provide sheltered

employment for blind adults in that region. Later on, the emphasis of the Society changes. A variety of services and different programs were initiated to suit the needs of the visually impaired adults and the changing attitudes of the Society.

The Minneapolis Society for the Blind, at the present, offers:

1. Personal adjustment services which cover things like communication skills, orientation-mobility, recreation services, special aids and appliances, personal and home management, home repair, leisure time activities, and counseling, etc.

2. Vocational services which include:

   a. Work evaluation, work adjustment, skill training, on-the-job training, job development, placement in competitive industries, and job related counseling.

   b. Transitional employment or extended employment in the sheltered workshop.

3. Community rehabilitation services which cover home teaching, community mobility training, and special aids and appliances.

4. Social services which include things like information and referral, recreation/socialization, volunteer services, diabetic education, and short-term counseling, etc.

5. Community consultation services which involve lectures, demonstrations, discussion groups, publications, films, consultation, information, and referral.

The Society is governed by a board of directors and run by an executive committee. The executive committee is headed by an executive director and includes heads of departments, directors of divisions, etc.

The rehabilitation division, like all rehabilitation centers, caters to the needs of adult visually impaired persons or those who have encountered great visual loss later in their life. The minimum age of a client to be accepted for training is fifteen. There is no maximum age; however, a greater number of the clients are over 50. Rehabilitation centers are now catering to people with other problems besides vision. A good number of clients at the Minneapolis Society for the Blind rehabilitation division are diabetics. Therefore, a special program to deal with this problem was initiated. This program covers education for the staff and clients and instruction for the diabetic clients on the best and easiest way to take their insulin dosage and to test their urine. A good connection with a diabetic clinic is maintained. Other problems, besides vision, encountered with advanced age are arthritis and loss of hearing. Special interpreters were employed to help with the rehabilitation of deaf/blind clients.

The number of clients, as in most rehabilitation centers, varies from one day to another. Every individual client has his or her own schedule, starting date, and finishing date. However, the latter is determined by the need of the client and his or her progress.

The expertise of the staff, their enthusiasm and dedication, along with the relaxed atmosphere play an important role in helping the clients to accept their problems and learn how to cope with them.

CHAPTER III

IMPLICATIONS TO SAUDI ARABIA

Background and Present Facilities

Before 1960 most of the schools in Saudi Arabia denied the blind children the right to attend. Those who did accept the blind did not offer any special methods to help them learn. The blind had no way to learn to read, write, do mathematics, science, or geography. For other subjects, they had to depend on their memories and readers. Their field of study was restricted to Arabic language and literature, history, Islamic theology and jurisprudence.

In 1957, a blind student came from a neighboring Arab State to attend the Riyad Religious Institute where blind were accepted. He brought with him the Braille method. He started teaching it to interested blind students on an individual basis during breaks, in the afternoon or evenings. The new method generated great interest and enthusiam among the blind at that school. A small group of them became highly motivated and decided to open an evening school to teach other blind this exciting method.

The school was opened in 1958/59, and Mr. Abdullah Al-Ghanim was the head of that school. Being blind himself and gifted with intelligence he was instrumental in bringing special education into existance in Saudi Arabia. The Ministry of Education gave the school access to some classrooms, and a small subsidy. About 100 students

attended the evening school. The school continued for another year with great interest and enthusiasm among the students and teachers.

By 1960, the Ministry of Education was convinced of the effectiveness and vitality of the modern methods of teaching the blind. The Ministry opened its first daytime school for educating the blind by using the modern methods. It was called the Al-Nour (the light) Institute for the Blind. Mr. Al-Ghaniam was appointed principal. The institute has an academic and vocational training program. One hundred and ten students were involved in these programs in the initial year.

In this school braille was introduced officially for the first time as well as the Taylor Slate for mathematics. This school started two programs. One for the children and the other for illiterate adults.

The children's program used the same curriculum offered for their sighted peers. It started with the elementary stage and then grew to cover the intermediate and high school stages.

There were, however, some limitations. One of them was that while the sighted children could elect to go to vocational high schools after the ninth grade, the blind children could not. The other one was that in the general high school program, after the tenth grade, the sighted could choose between the science or the literary program. The blind were offered the literary program only.

The adult program was opened for those who were twenty years of age or older. It was designed to offer a basic literacy program and extensive training in traditional trades which used to be thought

the only suitable ones for a blind person with limited education.

The subjects taught in this program include braille reading and writing, basic arithmetic, basic religious studies, and basic health and hygeine.

The training was offered in these trades:

1. Broom and brushmaking
2. Basket weaving and chair caining
3. Rug and tapestry weaving.

The duration of this program is six years. However, many of its graduates spent two or more years to master a one year course.

The school started as a day school. In addition to instructions the school offered a monthly stipend to every attendant to encourage the blind, especially the adults, to enroll.

The School for the Blind was received with a great interest and enthusiasm by the blind themselves. and some officials. This positive attitude has led to a rapid expansion without sufficient planning to secure well-trained teachers and other professionals. Within eight years, there were eight schools in different cities. All offered the same programs.

At the present time, there are ten schools offering basically the same services as the initial one. Many of them established residential facilities for those who live too far to be bused daily.

The number of blind people served by these schools increased from 110 in 1960 to 1,278 in 1972. Then it started decreasing again. In 1978, there were 698 students only, enrolled in nine schools.

Both the academic and the vocational training programs have serious problems to be dealt with. In spite of the obvious need, no rehabilitation facility has been established for the blind in the country yet.

Most of the major problems of the educational services for the visually impaired in Saudi Arabia, were seeded in the starting of the first school for the blind and were fertilized by the haphazard expansion in the number of schools. These are:

1. No special provision was included for those who had residual vision. They have to use braille even if they can read it by sight.

2. The trades offered in the vocational programs for adults were not salable for several reasons. Among them:

a. Since there were no private or public facilities to produce such products in the country, the graduates could not find work.

b. The materials and equipment necessary for the trades were not produced locally, which made it difficult for individuals or groups to establish their own workshops.

c. The local market is full of similar imported products which cost much less and probably look better.

3. The curriculum did not include any instructions whatsoever in compensatory skills--such as orientation and mobility, typing, daily living skills, etc.

4. The reliance on the Taylor method for mathematics and on slate and stylus for Braille writing along with teachers who had limited training, hindered the development of good skills in computation and Braille reading and writing among the students.

5. The lack of a plan for training teachers and other professionals has led to:

a. The continuous reliance on experts and teachers from other Arab countries who may not be familiar or aware of the needs of local communities, and the most suitable trades for each one. They are, quite often, not up to date on the developments in the field of education and training of the visually impaired.

b. The employment of the graduates of both the high school and the vocational programs of these schools as teachers in the same schools without any special training. This fact created a saturation of a number of teachers with a very poor quality of teaching.

6. The decision to employ every high school graduate of the schools for the blind has discouraged the graduates from pursuing higher education and did not put enough pressure on the colleges and universities to accept those who are interested in continuing their education. This has also created an attitude that blind individuals can only work as teachers for the blind.

7. The decision to employ all the vocational program graduates has changed some schools into a welfare agency. It had to pay for many blind individuals who have no function in the school.

These problems have been the major concern of the General Directorate of Special Education Programs in the Ministry of Education. Over the last few years, several measures have been suggested and many discussions have been conducted with other authorities. Unfortunately, there is little change up to this date.

Alternatives to Existing Services

By examining the existing services for the blind in Saudi Arabia, it is clear that it is a unique arrangement. It is a combination of a residential and a daytime school. It has educational and vocational programs and serves both children and adults. It doesn't educate them and train them only, but it employs them as well. It has many shortcomings and limited achievement. Therefore, it is logical to suggest the alternatives in two stages: the first stage will try to meet the most urgent needs to remedy the existing situation and would require fairly limited personnel and planning. The second stage will be for long range goals which would require extensive planning and a very long period for training a number of professionals.

Stage One

The purpose of this stage is:

1. To provide the high school graduate with extensive instruction and training in the compensatory skills.

2. To provide them with guidance and prevocational orientation and counseling.

3. To make sure that they get the necessary supportive services to enable them to go through a college or any professional training program whenever it is feasible.

4. To establish a low-vision service for both the pupils and the graduates who have some residual vision and encourage the use of remaining vision among the pupils.

5. To conduct in-service training for the teachers in the existing schools.

6. To eliminate the problems associated with the existing vocational training program.

7. To use the limited man-power and resources more efficiently.

To fulfill the purpose of this stage" I propose the following:

1. Start a one year post-high school program to be located in one of the schools, preferably the most centrally located one. This program should have the following components:

a. Orientation and mobility training

b. Extensive instruction and training in typing

c. Listening skills

d. Note taking and organizing

e. Improvement of Braille skills

f. Guidance and pre-vocational counseling and orientation

g. Techniques of independent living skills.

Such a program could be launched with one professional and an assistant in each area with the knowledge that this may restrict the number of the students to be accepted in the program. It should be expanded only when sufficient number of professional staff could be recruited.

2. In cooperation with the major universities and other professional training programs, a unit should be established to:

a. Launch a recording service for textbooks and other materials needed by blind students or trainees.

b. Arrange reader services

c. Provide, when appropriate the blind students and/or trainees with Brailled materials, charts, diagrams etc.

d. Launch a public information campaign to promote acceptance of the blind in various professions.

e. Initiate and promote a volunteer Brailling and recording service.

The staffing of such a unit does not necessarily require specially trained people. Some individuals who are working in the existing schools might be good candidates. The important thing is that they are dedicated and motivated.

3. Establish a mobile low-vision clinic. The aim of this clinic is to examine every individual in the existing services who have some residual vision. Then prescribe any suitable low vision aid, refer them for medical treatment, or give them and the educational facilities appropriate recommendations regarding type size, lighting environment, placement in the classroom, prognosis of the problem, etc.

This unit could start with one optometrist, specializing in low vision, one assistant, and one clerk.

Since the communication between the optometrist and the client is not extensive and does not have to be direct. that makes it feasible to employ an optometrist, specializing in low vision even if he doesn't speak Arabic. If this happened to be the case, it is necessary to have an assistant who has some background in vision and who communicates well in English as well as Arabic.

If this unit materialized, it could expand its services to students in all public schools who have some visual problems.

In fact, the author has suggested a unit similar to this as an alternative to a sight-saving school which was to be opened

three years ago in Riyadh. This school was meant to serve those children who are now in public schools but have some visual problems, in other words, those who have not been classified as blind. This means either they have better vision that 20/200 or they are efficient enough in the usage of their vision that no one noticed that they have a serious defect. The author advocated leaving those children in their neighborhood schools and create a unit to serve them, instead of having them bused and isolated in one school and offering very limited services to them.

Eventually, the suggestion was accepted: the sight-saving school idea has been abandoned· but the creation of a unit still has to be seen.

4. More pressure has to be exerted on the colleges of education to participate in conducting in-service training programs for the existing teachers. They also ought to motivate more of their graduate assistants to specialize in the education and rehabilitation of the visually impaired.

5. Since the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is the authority responsible for all the rehabilitation training and placement of laborers in the country, it should take over the vocational rehabilitation, training, and placement of the visually impaired adults too.

In fact, this issue has been agreed upon several years ago. Plans have been drawn to transfer the vocational training program for the adults from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Unfortunately, these

plans have not yet been implimented. The Ministry of Education should be able to focus on the proper education and pre-vocational orientation of the children.

6. The existing ten schools for the blind should be consolidated into four. This would make it feasible to:

a. Allow for more efficient use of the limited personnel and resources.

b. Conduct studies to improve the methods of teaching in general, and in particular, the teaching of specific skills such as Braille, reading and writing, and mathematics.

c. Experiment with the Arabic type size to find the most suitable one for the pupil with residual vision.

d. Encourage the use of residual vision and start a visual stimulation program.

e. Introduce important subjects such as orientation and mobility, techniques of daily living, socializing, and independent living skills, and typing, which has been proposed by the author some time ago but has not been fully accepted yet.

f. Experiments with gradual integration of visually impaired pupils with their sighted peers.

Stage Two

The purpose of this stage should be to:

1. Improve the educational services of the visually impaired in the existing schools.

2. Provide alternative programs for low functioning or multi-handicapped blind children and establish infant and pre-school programs.

3. Initiate alternative programs such as a resource room and itinerant teaching arrangements.

4. Establish a comprehensive library service for the non-print reader.

5. Establish comprehensive rehabilitation services for the visually impaired adults.

6. Provide other needed services such as parent counseling and home teaching and rehabilitation.

7. Establish a vision and hearing screening procedure for all pre-school and school children throughout the country.

It is my firm belief that the single factor causing the existing dilemma in the education of the visually impaired in Saudi Arabia is the lack of well-trained professionals and the lack of reliable training facilities, not only in Saudi Arabia, but in the Arab world at large.

For example, the percentage of specially trained teachers in the nine schools for the blind was approximately 15.1 percent during the school year 1978-1979. Although data from previous years is not available, I do not believe it was much better. In the same year, there were 225 teachers, 79 of them were from other Arab countries. Only 21 of those have had special training.

The situation was even worse among the teachers who are citizens of the country. Only 13 of those out of 146 have had some training in the education of the blind.

Therefore, it is my firm belief, that the cornerstone for fulfillment of the Stage Two objectives is the training of professionals.

An extensive training of a large number of professionals in all levels and in every discipline will make it possible to provide a variety of comprehensive services for the visually impaired in Saudi Arabia.

The major obstacles in training professionals, were, and still are:

1. The lack of training programs.
2. The length of the period a person has to spend in a non-Arabic speaking country to get a degree in the education or rehabilitation of the visually impaired.
3. The competition of other professions.
4. The lack of financial incentive.

Only the last obstacle has been minimized. Last year the government approved a proposal to give a thirty percent increase of the base salary to the teachers and other professionals who have special training and are working with the handicapped.

Two colleges of education have sent a very limited number of their graduates to pursue master and doctorate degrees in special education in the United States. The Ministry of Education has sent several individuals to the United States and England to have training in the field of special education. Some of them are still pursuing their training. A very few are back and working, while others have left the field or failed to complete their training for various reasons.

It is apparent that a good training program of professionals to work in the special education in general and in the education of the visually handicapped, in particular, has to be established in

the country. The establishment of a sound program for this purpose would require an excellent well-trained core of staff from the country itself, speaking the same language, identifying with the culture, and understanding the community needs and attitudes. They should be able to seek assistance and cooperate with other professionals from other countries and different cultures. Then, and only then, a large training program could be launched. Of course, this would take a long time, but it might be better to wait and have a sound training program rather than have a hapazard one which would create more problems than it would solve.

It is worth mentioning that some measures have been taken lately, to minimize the problems in the schools for the blind.

For example, the blind graduates of the high school will not be employed as teachers.

Instead, they are encouraged and helped to pursue a college degree. If they enrolled at any college they would be granted the same amount of money that their predessors received when they were given teaching positions.

Undoubtedly this would:

1. Minimize the surplus of unqualified teachers in the schools.

2. Force the colleges to give serious consideration to the enrollment of the blind in their programs.

3. Open other professions for the blind, besides teaching.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

In this paper, a brief description of three alternative programs for educating the visually impaired in the United States was given. The major advantages and disadvantages of each one of them were listed. These three programs were a residential school, a resource room, and an itinerant teaching arrangement. Some measures of minimizing the disadvantages of them were mentioned.

Also, a comprehensive rehabilitation facility for the adult visually impaired was briefly discussed.

A very short description of the existing services for the visually impaired in Saudi Arabia was given. The background of these services was noted, and the major problems facing it were identified. Measures to remedy these problems were suggested.

In addition, ideas were put forth for long-term goals to provide a variety of services for the visually impaired children and adults in Saudi Arabia.

Conclusions

1. None of the described educational delivery systems in this paper is necessarily good for every child.

2. Unless full supportive services are secured, the visually impaired children served by itenerant teaching or resource room programs may lack vital skills such as orientation and mobility, and daily living techniques.

3. Comprehensive rehabilitation services for visually impaired adults has a growing role in the society and ought to get full support.

4. Educational services for the visually impaired children in Saudi Arabia do not meet many of their individual needs.

5. The major deficit in the services for the blind in Saudi Arabia is mainly caused by the lack of well-trained professionals.

6. The Universities in Saudi Arabia do not have any type of program to prepare professionals to work in the education, rehabilitation, and training of the handicapped children or adults.

7. The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare in Saudi Arabia, has not yet assumed its role in the rehabilitation, training, and placement of the visually impaired adults.

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BASIC ARABIC

BRAILLE CHART

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

The Basic Arabic Braille Chart was developed at the Braille Unification Conference, held under the auspices of UNESCO in 1952

This pamphlet was prepared by:

Saleh Ibrahim Al-Muhanna
Rebecca Ann Anderson
Ahmed Mohamed Hamoud Shuga'a

Greeley, Colorado
June, 1984

(Braille cells taken from Alphabetical Index of Braille Signs, American Printing House for the Blind-1981)

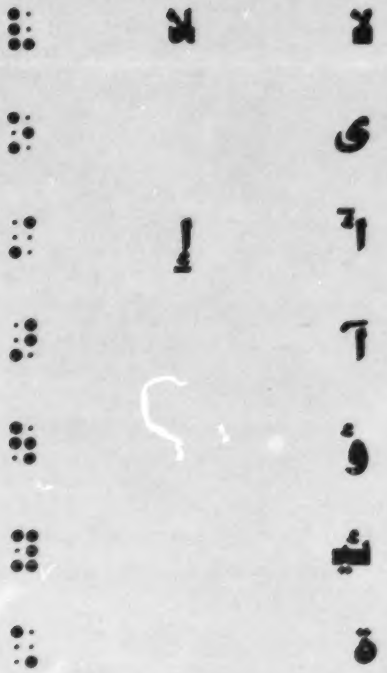
BASIC ALPHABET

ا		
ب	ب	
ت	ت	
ث	ث	
ج	ج	
ح	ح	
خ	خ	
د		
ذ		
ر		
ز		
س	س	

ث	ش		⠞
ص	س		⠎
ض	ش		⠩
ط			⠾
ظ			⠿
ع	ء	ع	⠁
غ	ه	غ	⠓
ف	ف		⠋
ق	ق		⠟
ك	ك		⠅
ل	ل		⠇
م	م		⠍

ذ	ن		⠿
و			⠿
ه	ه	ه	⠿
ا	ى		⠿

ACCENTED LETTERS

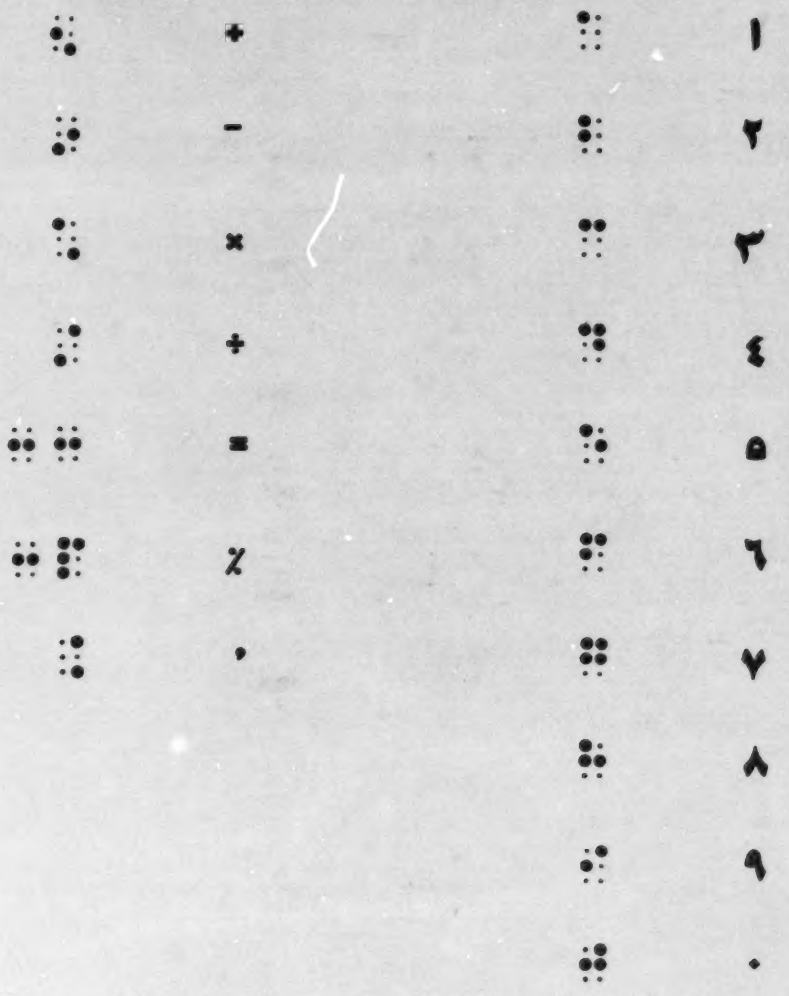


Although many Arabic letters have forms for initial, medial and final positions in the word, the braille symbol remains the same.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PUNCTUATION

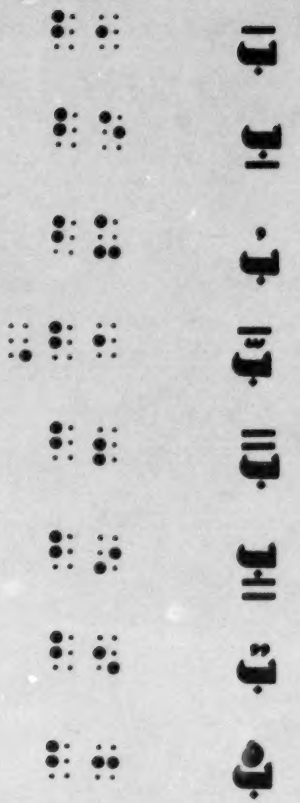
NUMBERS AND MATHEMATICAL SYMBOLS



The symbols used for the numbers are the same as the symbols used for some letters. For this reason it is necessary to use the number sign to distinguish between the letters and the numbers. The number sign:

When combining letters with numbers, the letter sign is used. The letter sign:

VOWEL POINTS



The vowel points are used infrequently. They are used primarily when accurate pronunciation is critical.
The second letter of the Arabic alphabet is shown with the vowel points as an example.